

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed April 20, 2004 has been received and its contents carefully considered. In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, reconsideration of the outstanding rejections and allowance of the application is earnestly solicited.

Initially, it is noted that without conceding the propriety of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, or 35 U.S.C. § 102, or 35 U.S.C. § 103, all of the claims pending in the application prior to the Office Action have been cancelled by the present amendment, and new claims 34-62 are now presented for consideration.

The rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112 has therefore been rendered moot, but in formulating the new claims, the Examiner's comments have been taken into account and the claims have been reviewed to ensure that antecedent basis is present in all the claims.

Each of the new claims is believed fully patentable over the references used in the rejections in the Office Action, including the Jones et al. patent and the Magnuson patent. Each of the new independent claims calls for a first flange at the first end of the speed reducer, a second flange at the second end of the speed reducer, and a cylindrical cover that surrounds the speed reducer. A first elastomeric ring (claims 34, 50 and 58) or a first elastomeric sealing and supporting means (claim 42) is disposed between the first flange and an inner surface of the cover to support the cover, and a second elastomeric ring (claims 34, 50 and 58) or a second elastomeric sealing and supporting means (claim 42) is disposed between the second flange and an inner surface of the cover to support the cover. The first and second flange and the cylindrical cover all remain stationary with respect to seal pedestal.

By virtue of this arrangement, it will be appreciated that the elastomeric rings or elastomer means disposed on flanges are used to support, and in some cases seal, the cover in a position around the speed reducer.

None of these particular features, in the combinations recited in the independent claims, are taught or suggested by Jones et al. or Magnuson. For example, the seal elements 20 referred to in the Office Action are described in Magnuson as being "oil seals". Magnuson does not teach or suggest utilizing resilient rings as the support of a cover element. To the contrary, the item identified in the Office Action as a cover 16 is rotationally supported by bearings 14 and 15. Jones et al. does not use any resilient ring elements as recited in the claims.

Further, turning to the dependent claims, in some embodiments, the cover can be sealed over the speed reducer, see for example the feature of claim 35 in which the first flange has a diameter less than the inner diameter of the cover. Also in some embodiments, the second flange has a shoulder with a projection having a diameter greater than an inner diameter of the cover, as recited in claim 36, to restrain the cover from axial movement in one direction by the projection. Claim 39 recites an additional feature of some embodiments of the invention, wherein the cover does not have direct touching contact with the first and second flanges. Also, as recited in dependent claim 40, some embodiments utilize rubber O-rings.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of this application is believed in order, and such action is respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference would expedite issuance of the application, the Examiner is respectfully invited to telephone the undersigned attorney at 202/861-1696.

Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leo J. Jennings', is written over the printed name.

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